

# TRANSCONTINENTAL DIALOGUES

By AUGUSTUS BRIDLE

THE National Transcontinental Grand Opera Company is not yet stranded. The bright particular stars, Sir Wilfrid Laurier and Hon. George Graham, have played to capacity houses ever since they struck the West. Travelling in their own private train, as exclusive as any circus, this aggregation of stars of the first magnitude have kept on trail of the advance agent without having to jump a single hotel bill or leave any luggage as security—and they will not be under the necessity of counting ties to get home.

The play bill in the centre of this page presents a few random scenes from the Grand Trunk Pacific drama—which a few years ago began to be written round the legend, "Cox Can't Wait," and at which several playwright people, particularly in the House of Commons and the sanctums of sundry editors have been tinkering ever since. This opera contains two scenes; one from Winnipeg to Moncton; one from Winnipeg to Prince Rupert. The original cost of staging the eastern scene was supposed to be fifty-one millions. This has been amended. What the other scene cost nobody seems to care; so long as it keeps moving.

The photographs were taken at a point west of Superior Junction. Similar pictures might have been taken a few days earlier of another impressive scene on the eastern section; when the new town of Graham, north of Fort William, was christened; but the photographer was not there.

The actors are in the best of spirits.

Scene: Rather wild country; early morning; background of spruce and jackpine; tepees of some Cree Indians over by a wooded creek.

Enter from the green room—Pullman—the Premier, Hon. George Graham, Senator Gibson, Mr. E. M. Macdonald, Mr. F. F. Pardee, Engineer Poulin and Mr. McArthur (constructionist), both of the G. T. P., and Secretary Jones of the Railway Department.

Premier: "Ah! A perfect natural theatre."

Macdonald: "Oh Wabigoon! List to the murmuring jackpines."

Graham: "George! I'm hungry. I could eat a bushel of huckleberries." Goes picking berries.

Macdonald: "Hmm! Wish I had Graham's Irish temperament. He doesn't seem to realise, Gibson, that we're halted between Manitoba and the Tory editors raising the deuce about the cost of the G. T. P. eastern section. Just a few miles from here are the very rocks that George E. Foster was chucking across the House last session. A few hours more and we'll be hearing howls from Manitoba about boundaries."

Pardee: "Don't worry, Mac. The West likes oratory."

Senator Gibson: "And there's room for thirty millions in the golden, glorious West."

Graham: "Good! It's poetry they want. I could write odes here. I'll do one—"

Macdonald: "Yes, sort of a box-car sonnet, eh?"

Pardee: "How many of the thirty millions will be good Grits?"

Gibson: "That's what we're out to discover."

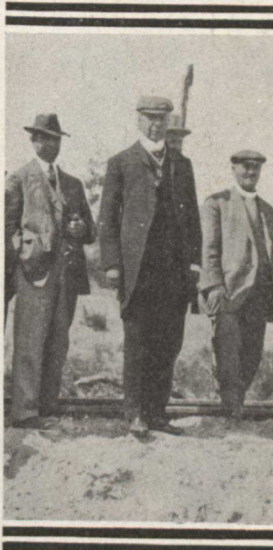
Graham: "Sir Wilfrid laughs. What now? Beg pardon, Sir Wilfrid!"

Premier (broadly hilarious): "Ah, Graham! How I wish Edward Blake were here. What a contrast we should show him!"

Graham: "Yes. Pity we can't use that axle-grease allusion, though. Sir John should have made that speech about the C. P. R. Still we can't kick. The G. T. P. is far more spectacular."

Macdonald: "History in politics is a queer thing. Now, George Brown would have gone in for the National Policy if Sir John Macdonald hadn't forestalled him. But we can't work that out West. Farmers out there don't believe in a protective tariff. Guess we'll stick to tariff for revenue only."

Pardee: "Well, we'll soon be out of the Tory editor belt, anyway. No matter what the western part of the road cost so long as it hauls out the wheat soon enough."



Senator Wm. Gibson (right) was in the West with Sir Wilfrid sixteen years ago.



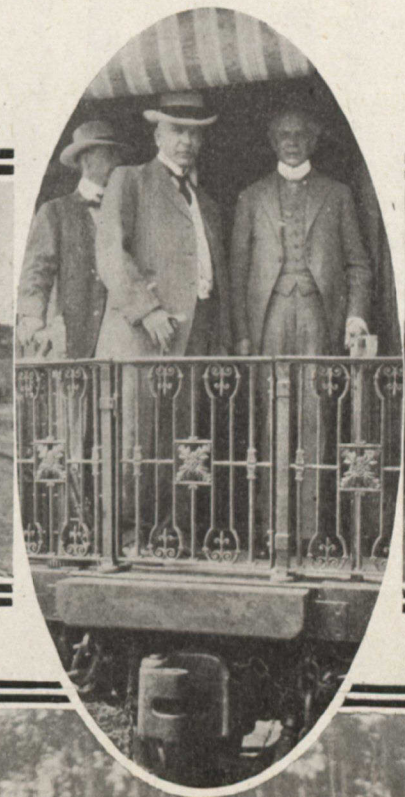
Sir Wilfrid grows hilarious over the National Transcontinental.



Hon. George Graham is smoking one of Mr. E. M. Macdonald's good cigars.



Sir Wilfrid discusses railroading with Mr. Poulin, the Engineer



Hon. Mr. Graham in baseball pose; Mr. Pardee reflective.



Minister, Members and Railway Technicians, all of one opinion about the National Transcontinental.

Gibson: "What a magnificent country! *Dulce et decorum est pro patria—*"

Sir Wilfrid: "Sh! We have not finished our work. Eh, my friends, but we are a long way from Ottawa; here in the haunts of the fur trader. Twenty-five years ago here the tomtom thumped to the whizz of the tomahawk. But now we are near the borders of a land where peace and plenty sit smiling upon every hill; where the smokes of the settlers rise like incense over a land that calls the nations of the world; and the Grand Trunk Pacific shall carry them." (Retires a few paces to inspect the track.)

F. F. Pardee: "Wonder where Oliver is now?"

Macdonald: "In the land of the midnight sun wearing Lochieux. Ho-ho!"

Graham: "Mac—I think you mean shoe-packs."

Gibson: "That's nothing. Earl Grey will wear moccasins anon."

Premier: "I say, friend McArthur—what weight of rails are these?"

McArthur: "Ninety pounds, Sir Wilfrid; made in Canada."

Premier: "Good! But I really should have thought—that a steel rail was heavier; much heavier. Hmm!"

Graham: "Say, boys, we've got time for a song before breakfast. You know I used to lead a choir down in Morrisburg. What's the matter with a quartette? Here, Pardee—you take the air; Senator Gibson, first bass—"

Pardee: "Out on first! Macdonald to bat."

Graham: "Order, fellows! We can't play baseball here. Wait till we get to the prairie. Mac—you'll take second bass. Now what'll we sing?"

Gibson: "Hmm! How about that touching parody—'Anybody Here Seen Lumsden?'"

Premier: "Ah, no! Sing 'O Canada!'"

They sing; but the combined effect is so much like "Yip-i-addi-ay!" that the Indians in the background begin to beat tomtoms.

Suddenly in the midst of the jubilation when the ardour of patriotism is at fever heat and the party have forgotten both politics and breakfast in the contemplation of the country, the whole country and nothing but the country—in rushes Secretary Lemaire frantically waving a copy of a Conservative paper dropped from a handcar. He makes direct for the Premier, who adjusts his glasses.

"Treason, Sir Wilfrid!"

The Premier: "Eh?" Scanning the front page. "What's this? Never!"

All: "Why, what's the matter, Sir Wilfrid?"

The Premier—paling a little; speaking slowly: "Ah! Merely a canard. I am sure of it. Hays would never do such a thing. No, no. There is nothing in this. I am quite sure the *Globe* has nothing of it. Absurd! To think, Graham, that our good Canadian wheat should ever get to the Atlantic by way of Chicago, robbing us of the eastward haul. Why, all this magnificent Winnipeg-to-Moncton section would be nothing but a white elephant!"

Graham: "Fudge! We should have annexation next. No, we'll have the Georgian Bay Canal—or my name's not George."

The Premier: "Yes. It must never be said—that the road built by Tories is more patriotic, more Imperial—than the Grand Trunk Pacific. No, my friends, every rail in this road is a new link in the Empire; every tie binds us yet more closely to the Mother Country. Have no fear. Mr. Hays will contradict this. It is a Tory hatch."

Conversation turns upon the Intercolonial, whose perennial deficit Hon. George Graham is credited with turning into a surplus, thereby depriving Tory editors of much good slangwhanging copy. Suddenly enters the *Globe* reporter reading aloud a head-line—

"Mackenzie wants the Intercolonial"; which so perturbs Mr. Graham that he thinks he is an editor again. Comes a lettergram wire from Hon. Mackenzie King to the Premier: "Hays misbehaving; am quoting you copy of his last two-line note—"

Graham: "By George! These old roads are more troublesome than the new one. Seems to me this is a railroad government—"

Pardee (slily): "Say, Macdonald, the Minister of Labour may be Premieristic material; but it seems to me—"

Macdonald: "Hmm! Same here."

Graham, sonorously: "Come to breakfast, boys!"